



Testimony to the Education Committee

March 6, 2012

Support for House Bill #5353: *AN ACT CONCERNING INDIVIDUALIZED EDUCATION PROGRAMS AND OTHER ISSUES RELATING TO SPECIAL EDUCATION*

Support for House Bill #5357: *AN ACT CONCERNING A DEAF CHILD BILL OF RIGHTS*

By Nora Duncan, Executive Director

The Arc Connecticut is a 60-year old advocacy organization committed to protecting the rights of people with intellectual, cognitive, and developmental disabilities and to promoting opportunities for their full inclusion in the life of their communities.

We support Bill #5353, most specifically its emphasis on (1) increased parent notification and involvement and, (2) continuing education and training for both teachers and key school personnel regarding the implementation of student Individualized Education Programs. These new requirements will bring greater awareness of the unique needs of special education students and the importance, both under the law and in the classroom, of how a plan on paper becomes a real life program for individualized supports that lead to long-term success.

*The Arc Connecticut would like to see additional emphasis placed on the transition from student life under the IDEA, where the investment of time and resources is intensive and mandated, to life as an adult, where so often the lack of preparation for the transition to adulthood, where there is often no support, makes a mockery of that investment. The inconsistency of how transition is approached across the state is dramatic and the Education Committee is asked to consider mechanisms by which to improve upon the current law and the reality of its implementation in schools.*

We support Bill 5357 and encourage Connecticut to join the 11 other states that have already passed a Deaf Child Bill of Rights. Approximately 75% of deaf children in Connecticut are not reaching goals in CMT and CAPT assessments, as compared to approximately 45% of their hearing peers. This bill would help bridge this dramatic achievement gap by requiring that the Individualized Education Program team include the use of a language and communication plan and that the personnel administering and implementing the Program be proficient in the language and communication mode of choice.

Thank you for your efforts and please do not hesitate to call upon The Arc Connecticut for more information or further clarification of our position.

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Thank you for letting me submit testimony electronically. My name is Jamie Lazaroff and I am the Self Advocate Coordinator for the Arc of Quinebaug Valley. I do want to comment on HB 5353. I think there must be greater emphasis on the Special Education teacher. You can set the guidelines for the individual IEP but if there is no oversight of the Special Education teacher in the classroom to follow the plan the student can very easily fall through the cracks. In the training and education of student teachers going into Special Education and existing Special Education teachers, it is very important for all teachers to remember that all students can learn. In this session, it would be wise to look at recertification for all existing Special Education teachers in the state.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely

Jamie Lazaroff

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